

## REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

GRANT PERIOD: 2017–2022

### ENHANCING PERMANENCY IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (EPIC) PROGRAM

**LEAD AGENCY:** The Ohio State University

**TARGET SERVICE AREA:** Fairfield and  
Pickaway Counties

**LOCATION:** Columbus, Ohio

**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND  
FAMILIES REGION:** 5

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT SERVED:** OH-003

### BRIEF PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** The Ohio State University's Enhancing Permanency in Children and Families (EPIC) program includes three evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies: (1) family treatment drug court (FTDC) and medications for opioid use disorders (MOUD, formerly MAT), (2) peer recovery supporters; and (3) parenting and support for kinship providers. The interventions holistically provide supports to families involved in the child welfare system due to substance use to get parents into treatment and increase child permanency and well-being.

**TARGET POPULATION:** Families struggling with substance use and involved in Fairfield and Pickaway County Children Services.

**PROJECTED NUMBERS SERVED:** Over five years, the proposed number served is 214 parents through peer recovery supporters, 117 parents through FTDC, and 125 kinship caregivers through parenting and support for kinship providers. The program will serve a total of 250 unique adult caregivers.

### MAJOR PROGRAM GOALS

**GOAL 1:** Increase timely access to services for parents involved in the child welfare system due to substance use.

**GOAL 2:** Enhance child safety and improve permanency in Fairfield and Pickaway counties.

**GOAL 3:** Increase child, parent, and caregiver well-being.

### KEY PROGRAM SERVICES

- Co-location (Peer recovery supporters are collocated in Fairfield and Pickaway County Job and Family Services)
- Intensive Outpatient Treatment
- Medications for Opioid Use Disorders (MOUD)
- Nurturing Parenting Program
- Peer Recovery Coaching
- Residential Treatment
- Traditional Family Treatment Court Track
- UNCOPE

## PARTNER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Fairfield County Job and Family Services
- Pickaway County Job and Family Services
- Fairfield County Juvenile and Probate Divisions Common Pleas Courts
- Pickaway County Common Pleas Courts Probate and Juvenile Divisions
- Ohio Guidestone
- Integrated Services of Behavioral Health
- Recovery Center
- Berger Health Partners
- American Court and Drug Testing Services
- Ohio State University, Dr. Bridget Freisthler and Dr. Jennifer Price-Wolf

## EVALUATION DESIGN

The local evaluation of Enhancing Permanency in Children and Families (EPIC) has an impact study and a process study. The grantee is also participating in the RPG cross-site evaluation studies of family and child outcomes, program implementation, and collaboration among RPG grantees and partners.

### IMPACT STUDY DESIGN

The grantee uses a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of EPIC services. Members of the program group participate in family treatment drug court, have access to medications for opioid use disorders, and are connected with a certified peer recovery supporter. They receive these services for about six months. In cases where children have been removed and placed with kinship care providers, those caregivers receive parenting classes and certain financial supports. All program group families come from two Ohio counties: Fairfield and Pickaway.

The evaluation has two comparison groups. One receives Ohio Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma (START) services, including pairing participants with a peer recovery supporter provides intensive case management and referral to drug treatment providers. Children in Ohio START receive trauma counseling as needed. The second comparison group receives business-as-usual services, which primarily consist of meetings with a caseworker and referrals to other services. These families may also receive services focused on substance abuse, such as inpatient or outpatient treatment or substance abuse counseling, and it is possible that some of them are paired with a peer recovery supporter, because this service is now covered by Medicaid. In addition, families in both comparison groups may receive family treatment drug court or MOUD, but unlike families in the program group, they will not be systematically referred and will not receive additional supports for kinship caregivers. Both comparison groups receive services for an average of about 6 months. Families for both comparison groups are identified through administrative data and come from two counties (for each comparison group) that are similar to Fairfield and Pickaway in their demographic characteristics.

The impact study includes 750 families, with 250 in the program group and about 500 in the two comparison groups (about 250 each). The grantee is examining impacts in the following domains: permanency, safety, and recovery. The grantee is also examining how outcomes in two other domains (child well-being and family functioning) change for families in the program group over the course of their time in the RPG program and compared to 100 families who receive the Ohio START intervention.

Data sources include administrative data (for both the program and comparison groups) and information collected by data collectors using standardized instruments (for only the program

group).<sup>1</sup> A research assistant will collect data with the program group using the standardized instruments. Data will be collected at two time points for each program-group family: (1) when they begin services (baseline) and (2) about six months following baseline (at the end of services).

## **PROCESS STUDY**

In the process study, the grantee is examining (1) procedures used to coordinate services between child welfare, behavioral health, and the courts; (2) whether families receive appropriate services matched to their needs and whether they receive them promptly; and (3) the successes and challenges of service implementation and collaboration. The evaluation will also yield early formative feedback to improve implementation over the course of the grant. Data sources include documentation related to the collaboration, program documents, and administrative data.

## **SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES**

***Involvement of Partners:*** All key partners serve on the Steering Committee and meet biweekly (behavioral health on a monthly basis) to discuss funding options, improve collaboration between the partners and other agencies, and identify additional partners to join the collaboration.

***Integrating Activities and Institutionalizing Strategies:*** After the grant period has ended, child welfare workers will continue to provide the UNCOPE screen and record the findings within the Needs Portal. The Needs Portal will continue to be used to ensure quick entry into services and follow-up to ensure families in the child welfare system are receiving the services to which they are referred.

***Sustainable Funding Streams:*** Braiding the RPG funding with other sources (Medicaid and local dollars) will help to sustain services. The parent education component of the kinship support program is billable under the therapeutic behavioral services of Medicaid.

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<sup>1</sup> A small subset of Ohio START participants (about 100) will have primary data collected by a research assistant at baseline and six-month follow-up data with funding from a separate grant.